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Medieval Diversity and the *Charivari*

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Introduction

A brochure announcing newly-published books came in the mail the other day. Boldly, it proclaimed one item to be an access to, as it stated, "real cultural literacy," procured, quite simply, by reading the advertised volume. "Ecofeminism, Celtic revival, Network theory, Alchemy, Dada, Neo-Darwinism, Gene therapy, Ockham's Razor, Dialectics, and Charivari"—all these topics, and many more, were described in pithy essays. But other, more basic concepts, which the brochure designated as "primary," such as truth, beauty, death, civilization, and self, could be understood at a glance. One could even imagine oneself taking a short course on truth or alchemy, while commuting on the Los Angeles Freeway, by reading one succinct paragraph each time the traffic stalled.

"Real cultural literacy," it appears, also includes *charivari*, that is, "characters which are diverse and varied." It was of interest to notice *charivari* in the flier that arrived in the mail, since one can also observe the concept—as "various and diverse figures"—in the writings, for example, of Augustine and Cassiodorus during the period known today as late antiquity, where this concept assumes what can be regarded as seminal importance. This concept of "varied and diverse figures" or "characters" has been selected because it appears to slide easily in and out of so-called popular culture; rides astride the boundaries between play and work, fun and serious designations of abstraction, between oral and literate communication, indeed, in some cases, calling into question reasons for these boundaries. The question comes to mind: what constitutes the potency and magneticism of the idea of varied and diverse figures? How does the idea accrue modular units of significance—which it appears to do. Why does it occur in many and diverse geographical, cultural, and chronological contexts? These issues form the core of this study, with a conclusion that the subject of varied and diverse figures or characters also exposes the nature of **diversity** itself.

The Emergence of the *Charivari*

Component by component the subject is treated by fourth-century Greek Early Christian writers who discuss various and diverse aspects, ways and paths, in short, the topic of the various and diverse itself; by the sixth-century, late-antiquity writer Cassiodorus, who brings up, in countless contexts, various and diverse figures, identifying each individual *figura* by name; by the twelfth-century teacher at the nascent University of Paris, Alan of Lille, who brings into the conceptual arena various and diverse **sounds**, and by the thirteenth-century theologian-natural scientist, who was also the first rector of the University of Oxford, Robert Grosseteste, who explores the nature of **diversity** itself. Finally, toward the end of the thirteenth century, within the disputations of the theological faculty of the University of Paris, Thomas Aquinas relates imaginary varied and diverse figures or **characters** to **sound**. Hence, diversity is exemplified by varied and diverse faces,

bodies, and, especially, sounds, which, interestingly enough, according to at least one ethnomusicologist, Claudie Marcel-Dubois, form the essence of contemporary, popular French *charivari*. This, of course, is the most important aspect, as well, of what is understood as the popular *charivari* or *chevarie* today, that is, the musical, performative, and always discordant serenade usually of an unlikely marriage pair.¹

But I do not agree with her. It seems to me that all of the components mentioned in this minor tour de France of late antique and medieval philosophical inquiries concerning this concept are necessary and essential to a meaningful, significant conceptualization of the *charivari*. In other words, the history of a concept, as a rich topos, and its significance for those who used it with authority and energy provides understanding of the concept itself. Further, the multiplicity of largely autonomous single conceptual modules, which convene as aspects of this multivalent concept, demonstrates an important aspect of the transmission of concepts in general. It will also be shown that some of the most prominent modules have origins and are given

¹ She is speaking from the standpoint of a scholar who is primarily interested in music, but "varied and diverse figures" is equally important. The visual-aural are in equipoise. See her, "La paramusique dans le charivari français contemporain," in Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt eds., *Le Charivari. Actes de la table ronde organisée à Paris, 25-27 avril 1977 par l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales et le Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (Civilisations et Sociétés 67, Paris: L'École, 1981; New York: Mouton, 1981) 45-53; especially, 50: "Dans la mesure où la paramusique, avec ses sonorités particulières, prend place au coeur du processus charivari, on est conduit à poser valablement l'interrogation suivante: la paramusique serait-elle la plus juste image de marque du rite charivari? Elle est, en tout cas, la garantie d'authenticité et d'ancienneté du rite." Cf. R. Pinon, "Qu'est-ce qu'un charivari? Essai en vue d'une définition opératoire," in *Kontakte und Grenzen. Probleme der Volks-, Kultur- und Sozialforschung* (Festschrift für Gerhard Heilfurth; Göttingen: Schwartz, 1979) 398. Carlo Ginzburg in his contribution to the volume, *Le Charivari*, "Charivari, associations juveniles, chasse sauvage," points to the contrast between Charivari as form (Claude Levi-Strauss, *Mythologiques*, I *Le cru et le cuit* [Paris: Plon, 1964], x), arrived at deductively from function, and function, reached from an empirical point of view, inductively (as presented by E. P. Thompson, "'Rough Music': le Charivari anglais," *Annales. Écoles des hautes études en sciences sociales. Centre de recherches historiques* 27 [1972] 285). None of the above investigated pre-fourteenth century delineations of varied and diverse figures or characters.

significance within highly literary, even scholastic, intellectual environments—such as the thirteenth-century University of Paris intellectual milieu. This makes no difference at all in their transmission, that is to say that the boundaries between “oral” and “written” culture, with regard to the transmission of “varied and diverse figures or characters,” do not exist.

Let us retrace some of the steps. The notion of varied and diverse figures depends upon three ideas which are frequently presented in the writings of the four important fourth-century Greek writers known as the Cappadocians, that is Basil of Caesarea, his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and their sister, Macrina, as well as Gregory of Nazianzus.² Their writings appear to form a coherent system, presenting three important aspects for a conceptualization of the “varied and diverse.”³

First, there is a model in a perception of God himself, who contains various and diverse attributes within the composite of his being. The *ousia*, or substance of God is composed of the greatness of God, God's power, wisdom, goodness, providence, justness of judgment—to cite just a few of these various and diverse aspects.⁴ In fact, remarkably, one knows all of the

² Basil of Caesarea (died 379), his brother, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 395), their sister, Macrina, and Gregory of Nazianzus (389); for a recent study of this group of writers, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (The Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

³ Cf. Brooks Otis, “Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System,” *DOP* 12 (1958) 95-124, especially, 97: “Though everyone recognizes the agreement of thought among the great Cappadocians, not enough explicit attention has as yet been given to the real coherence of their doctrinal system.” Pelikan has given this attention and shown this coherence in the work cited above.

⁴ These varied and diverse (though related) characteristics of God could be engraved upon the soul as the “impress of the divine and transcendent mind.” They form the varied *viae eminentiae*: power, purity, constancy, freedom from contrariety; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orationes de beatitudinibus* 6, in Jacques Paul Migne ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* (PG 44; Paris: Garnier, 1857-1866) 1268-9; for “variety” as basic to generation and foundational to sensory impression, that is, as a basic concept, see also Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 1.402, 2.430, 3.434, in Werner Jaeger ed., *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1921) I.143-44, I.352, II.147; Pelikan, in *Christianity and Classical Culture*, summarizes: “It was because of this will and power of God that there could

various and diverse aspects without actually knowing God's substance itself, which brings up the whole subject of knowing.⁵ Accordingly, the second aspect of the Cappadocians' concept is, just as there are various and diverse ways of knowing God,⁶ there are also various and diverse manners by which God has revealed himself.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets

is the source of this diversity, as well as the trumpet-call incipit of the Apostle Paul's letter to Jewish Christians, the New Testament book of Hebrews.⁷ To paraphrase Gregory of Nazianzus on the subject of diversity: there are different **patterns** (*schemata*) of life and avocations, which led to different **places** according to the **proportion** of faith, and therefore were

be, within one cosmic system, the great variety evident both to everyday experience and to scientific study. Yet it was also because of this will and power of God that all this variety could be brought together "into the cosmos as a whole" (105-106). [Emphasis added.]

⁵ Cf. Basil, *Epistolae* 234.I, in Yves Courtonne ed., *Saint Basile. Lettres*, Vol. 3 (3 vols., Collection des universités de France; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966) 3.41-42. See Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*: "[People ask], 'Do you worship what you know or what you do not know?' If I answer, 'I worship what I know,' they immediately reply, 'What is the essence of the object of worship?' Then, if I confess that I am ignorant of the essence, they turn on me again and say, 'So you worship you know not what!' I answer that the word 'to know' has many meanings. We say that we know the greatness of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the goodness of God, the providence of God over us, and the justness of the judgment of God—but not the very *ousia* of God.' Nor did this mean, as might seem, that while no one of these constituted the nature of God, the Deity could be thought of as 'composed of these various elements or attributes' somehow put together" (55).

⁶ Cf. Pelikan's summary based on Gregory of Nyssa's, *Contra Eunomium* 2.475-78, in Jaeger, I. 364-65. See Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*: "Therefore, it was incumbent on the human mind to 'grope for the ineffable being 'in many and varied ways,' and never to pursue the mystery in the light of one idea alone; for our grasping of God would indeed be easy if there lay before us one single assigned path to the knowledge of God,' rather than the many paths made obligatory by the fragmentary glimpses granted to the limited human mind. Yet this did not imply a 'splitting up' of the divine nature itself on the basis of these diverse ways of knowing about God" (62).

⁷ Hebrews 1:1 (KJV).

called *ways* (*passiones*) of knowing.⁸ Notice the use of vocabulary here, that is, pattern, or *schema*, *schemata*, the plural, was consistently translated into Latin as *figurae*, or *characterae*; *passiones*, from *pathos*, was translated as the Latin *modi*. These two concepts, pattern/figure or character, and mode, are presented with the concept of proportion. Together, the concepts of *figurae* according to diverse and varied *modes* give us, already in the fourth century, in the Greek language, a concept of varied and diverse figures or characters, that is, *figurae sive characterae variatae*.⁹ The Latin expression, *characterae variatae* or, truncated, *charivari*, will, in approximately nine centuries, follow.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. his, *Orationes* I.27.8, in Paul Gallay with Maurice Jourjon tr. and ed., *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 27-31 (Discours Théologiques)* (Introduction, Texte Critique, Traduction et Notes; SC 250; Paris: Cerf, 1978) 90. See Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 57.

⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetica*, 47a18, 48b36, 49b3, 55a29, 56b8 in which a concept of *schemata* is described as the distinct shapes formed by painters or sculptors, or the postures and gestures of mimes and dancers assumed in order to make *characters* distinct, consistent, and recognizable. The *Poetica*, known surely by the Cappadocians, became available to the Latin-reading intellectual community of the university of Paris by 1278 in the translation of Thomas Aquinas' fellow Dominican, William of Moerbeke.

¹⁰ Cf. Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the *Metaphysica* III.54, in M.-R. Cathala, O.P. ed., *Commentaria in libros Aristotelis*, Vol I (3 vols., Raimondo M. Spiazzi et al. eds.; Taurin: Marietti, 1948): (Arist. *Met.* II.33) "Oportet vero aliquantulum constituere ordinem ipsius ad contrarium nobis earum quae a principio quaestionum. Incipiunt quidem homines, ut diximus, omnes ab admirari, si ita habent quae admodum mirabilium automata, nondum speculantibus causam, aut circa solis conversiones, aut diametri non commensurationem." (*Commentarium Thomae*) "Quod autem ignorantiam fugere quaerant, patet ex hoc, quia illi, qui primo philosophati sunt, et qui nunc philosophantur, incipiunt philosophari propter admirationem alicuius causae: aliter tamen a principio, et modo: quia a principio admirabantur dubitabilia pauciora, quae magis erant in promptu, ut eorum causae cognoscerentur: sed postea ex cognitione manifestorum ad inquisitionem occultorum paulatim procedentes incoeperunt dubitare de maioribus et occultioribus, sicut de passionibus lunae, videlicet de eclipsi eius, et mutatione *figurae* eius, *quae variari videtur*, secundum quod diversimode se habet ad solem" (17). [Emphasis added.]

Aquinas' comment which incorporates the expression *figurae eius, quae variari videtur* is directed toward a significant passage in the *Metaphysica* in which the stages of *theoria* are discussed, commencing with the first moment of astonishment and wonder: "It is necessary, therefore to consider in order that which seems on the onset of an inquiry to represent opposing positions, or contraries, just as one, at the beginning of an investigation may look with wonder and amazement at puppets without knowing the source of their movement." Aquinas comments, making much of

Finally, for these Greek writers, **diversity** is fundamental to the understanding, not only of God and his ways of dealing with human beings, but of human beings themselves. Humanity was created from heterogeneous sources. Unlike animals, the diverse and varied manifestations of the entire human race had been created on the basis of divine deliberation out of preexistent substance.¹¹ Accordingly, diversity itself, in terms of diverse nations, diverse languages as well as standards of language and grammar, diverse ambitions and standards of honor (*kalon*), diverse pasts and perceptions of history; all were the result of God's conscious design, and reflected the nature of God himself, incorporating personal variety within essential unity. We find Augustine, as well, making a point of "diverse and various figures or characters" in *The City of God*:

So long, then, as the heavenly City is wayfaring on earth, she invites citizens from all nations and all tongues, and unites them into a single pilgrim band. She takes no issue of that **diversity of customs, laws, and traditions** whereby human peace is sought and maintained. Instead of nullifying or tearing down, she preserves and appropriates whatever in the **diversities of divers races** is aimed at one and the same objective of human peace, provided only that they do not stand in the way of the faith and worship of the one supreme and true God.¹²

both varied figures and contrary motion: "After an initial inquiry, in which one wonders and is bewildered, one proceeds step by step from cognition of what is manifest to an understanding of hidden things, as, for example, the movements of the moon, as well as its eclipse, and the mutation of its figures, which are various (*et mutatione figurae eius, quae variari videtur*)."¹¹ *Figurae* and *characterae* are synonymous expressions, since they are both translations of the Greek *schema*, hence *characterae variae*, with the equivalence of *figurae* and *characterae* justified by the fact that they are translational synonyms.

¹¹ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 3 (Patrologia Graeca 44) 136. See Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 122-3.

¹² See Acts 17:22-28, especially 26: "And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ... " (KJV); cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 9, in Jaeger, 8-I.286. It is important to note that Gregory of Nyssa is making a point of describing "variety and diversity," not relativism, particularly

Expositio Cassiodori Psalmorum

For Cassiodorus, commenting, in Latin, on the book of psalms in the sixth century, the concept of “varied and diverse figures,” was an operating principle, to which he has constant recourse, underlying the figures which took form and acquired names within his expository writing. The psalms were loaded, above all, with varied and diverse figures, and Cassiodorus, the psalm commentator, accumulates a long list of their names and attributes. Varied and diverse figures are, to a certain extent, corporeal. They present design by means of possessing bodily form, and giving forth gestures, at least to the imagination.¹³ Varied and diverse figures are characters; each is characteristic. They can be recognized as consistent individuals because they are presented by means of sharp, delineating lines. Further, plurality is important. One figure or character is not enough. Form is delineated and made obvious by multiplicity within sequence, by diverse and varied *figurae sive characterae* in continuous progression. Differences between individual figures are made more obvious by this conjunction and juxtaposition.

For Cassiodorus, music as an **instrument**—achieving order in material—made conjunction and juxtaposition perceptible. It therefore made connection—the most elusive aspect—clear, forming an analogy to an abstraction. “Why is it that music instruments so frequently occur in the psalms,” asks Cassiodorus in one of his psalm commentary conclusions. “Is it not because the aural

with regard to ethics and morals. See Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 143. As the above quotation demonstrates, “Diverse and various peoples” is also a topos of Augustine, *The City of God* (Gerald G. Walsh et al., trans., With a Condensation of the Original Foreword by Étienne Gilson, edited with an Introduction by Vernon J. Bourke; Garden City: Image Books, 1958) 465.

¹³ Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* I.153.7, in Marcus Adriaen ed., *Opera* (CChrSL 97-98, Ake Jason Fridh et al., eds.; Turnholti: Brepols, 1958): “... figurativer dicitur ... quasi aliquid corporale;” the implication is that what is actually sensed has a corporeal quality. *Figurae* also belong to, as Cassiodorus states, a “species of future things, offering [something] to the eyes, especially the inner eye, and simultaneously exciting motion within the mind.” These characteristics, furthermore, delineate the *schema* or *figura* from other objects, or from unformed substance. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* I.154.8: “Hoc schema dicitur idea, cum speciem rei futurae, velut oculis offerentes, motum animi concitamus.”

sense is perceived to be stimulated, thus provoking the receptory faculty of the heart itself?"¹⁴ Further, Cassiodorus relates the varied and diverse figures of individual music tones in continuity, with varied and diverse instruments. They have the same function, and do the same thing, namely, make obvious, by their outer forms—as figural images, and the sounds emitted-inner substance; they must be diverse, that is, several must occur within a sequence. Cassiodorus' varied and diverse figures—whether figures of speech, figures of human forms and characters, or music instruments—all have bodily, sonorous capacities and do something. Figures show function.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cassiodorus discusses the "instrumental" function of music as making known, and serving as an analogy, to abstractions. Further, music tones themselves are outer, perceptible, diverse, and varied *figurae* functioning within continuity. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* II.88l: "Conclusio psalmi. Quid est hoc quod instrumenta musica frequenter posita reperimus in psalmis, quae non tam videntur mulcere aurium sensum, sed provocare potius cordis auditum? Sed quoniam ille sonus et modulatio tiliarum a sacris mysteriis nostra nihilominus aetate discessit, restat ut intelligentiam huius rei spiritaliter perquirere debeamus. Musica est disciplina quae rerum sibi congruentium, id est sonorum differentias et convenientias perscrutatur. Haec merito ponitur ad rerum spiritalium similitudines explicandas; quoniam concentus eius virtute inconvenientiae subsistit. Nam sive quando psalmodiam dicimus, sive quando mandatis Domini operam navanter impendimus, dulcissimae harmoniae gratia temperamur. Et si causas huius rei alta deliberatione perpendas, quaelibet creatura rationabilis, si auctoris sui vivat imperio, ab hac convenientia non probatur excepta. Merito ergo incessanter praecipimur Domino psallere, in psalmo citharizare, in cithara psallere, iubilare in tubis ductilibus et corneis; ut dubium non sit haec instrumenta dulcisona probabilium actuum nobis indicare concordiam."

¹⁵ The human voice comes into this category, since it connects sound with body. It is therefore, obviously, an instrument. The question arises: why is it necessary, or even desirable, to use music instruments as a comparative vehicle? It is because equipollence must be obvious in order to have an analogous relationship, that is, the inner quality of connection between two "sides" of the analogical ratio must be self-evident for comparison to avoid absurdity. Cassiodorus shows his awareness of the nature of analogical relationships by his use and development of music instruments. He uses the *cithara*, a plucked, string instrument, in particular, as *exemplum*. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, II.1328.3f (in the context of the varied and diverse figures/instruments of Psalm 150): "*Cithara* enim ligni quodam ventre inferius constituto, a summo chordarum filis venientibus sonos recipit, atque in unam gratiam iucunditatis emittit. Quae omnia humanis actibus comparata, figuraliter ibi dicuntur laudes Domini personare." Varied and diverse instruments together, in their diversity, are perfected within the discipline of music, II.1329.5.6: "His igitur decursis totius musicae disciplinae assignata perfectio est. Flatus in tuba, pulsus in cithara, tinnitus in cymbalis, vox in choro, spiritali

Together, various and diverse figures, as, for example, the letters of the alphabet, constitute eloquence; the variety and diversity of music tones could, with consideration and order, generate concord, as geometric figures show congruence. Numerical figures in significant order give rise to rationality.¹⁶ Finally, the individuality of each one of the group of varied and diverse figures is made known by comparison, especially if they are contraries or opposites of one another.¹⁷ One is tempted to ask the question of Cassiodorus, what do variety and diversity teach us, and why do you think that this is an important topic? I believe his answer would be: diverse and varied figures are observable in life; they therefore offer a direct connection to life experience. Diverse and varied manifestations disclose essence. Indeed, according to the Greek writers we have considered, diverse and varied figures correspond to creation itself, since heterogeneous humanity was formed from a unified "substance." The *topos* also discloses a formal process in that diverse and varied figures together, in order, form a rational, significant sequence or composite.¹⁸

harmonia dulcissimus ille concentus, qui non auribus carneis auditur, sed contemplatione purissimae mentis advertitur."

¹⁶ Eloquence and concord, however, require a "digestive process" presumably on the part of the one who is placing them together in order. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* II.881: "Eloquia enim Domini non in palati sapiunt, sed magis cum fuerint degustita dulcescunt;" II.1077: "Hactenus litterae istius versus habuerunt orationem, subsequentes vero usque ad finem narrationis ordine promuntur ... Iste et alii versus usque ad finem litterae non habent deprecationem, sed narrationem ... Custodire se legem Domini semper affirmat, quia in ipsa variari nefandum est." [Emphases added.]

¹⁷ Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, II.704.14: "Hoc schema dicitur syndyasmos, quod latine interpretatur collatio sive coniunctio; fit autem ex comparatione contrariorum, quando aut personae, aut causae sive in contrarium, sive in simile comparantur." Dissimilar things can be compared, II.706.17: "... Et intende quod subsequencia usque ad finem psalmi per figuram parabolen dicitur, quando res genere dissimiles sibimet comparantur."

¹⁸ Cassiodorus, in many aspects of his presentation of *figura* properties and potential, was reinforced by, and, no doubt drew upon Chalcidius' translation into Latin of Plato's *Timaeus*; *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, in Raymond Klibansky ed., *Plato Latinus* IV (Corpus Platonicum medii aevi; London: The Warburg Institute, 1975). For example, figures (geometric) reconcile opposing linear positions: "Sint ergo etiam nunc descriptae figurae. Duas ex adverso positas lineas parallelogrammas geometrici appellant, consequenter etiam planas quadraturas parallelogramma ... Sint igitur duo similia parallelogramma, quibus

Small wonder that diverse and various figures form the structure of Cassiodorus' work. Taking a small section of psalm commentaries as an example, one finds the following varied and diverse figures: the *hypozeuxis*, *epembasis*, *auxesis*, *mythopoeia*, *metabole*, *parabole*, *genus schematis*, *exordio*, *hyperbole*, *allegoria*, *epexegetis*, *syllipsis*, *peusis*, *idea*, *synathroesmos*, *antisagoge*, *syndesmos*, *epimone*, *erotema*, *paradigma*, *zeugma*, *ethopoeia*, *aetiologia*, *parenthesin*, *characterismos*, and many, many more.¹⁹ They all have names,

assistunt Graecae litterae ΑΓΘ, habentia aequales angulos, unum qui est sub ΒΓΔ ei qui est sub ΗΓΖ" (63); **substance**—hence **figures**—is simple or multiplex (example of numerical figures): "Cum enim sit origo numerorum omnibusque ex se substantiam subministret rationesque eorum tam simplices quam multiplicatas ipsa contineat" (88); **figures** are presentational, demonstrating discretion within cultivated order: "Quae igitur modo separare animo videbamus a silva, rursus ei praesentemus ac velut in suum locum reponamus, hoc est genera qualitates figuras, nec inordinate haec ipsa et utcumque, sed cum cultu et ordine" (305); **figures** often involve flat surfaces (as plane figures): "... prius epipedas, hoc est planas figuras, quae longitudinem modo et latitudinem, nullam vero profunditatem habent, exponit ... Utitur probatione arithmetica" (61f); various and diverse **figures** are differentiated on the basis of properties which often form contraries: "... quae constat ex formis et qualitatibus, ignis quidem splendor levitas calor et figura, terrae vero siccitas gravitas figura; similiter etiam earum materialium quae inter ignem terramque insertae sunt aliquae sint naturales proprietates oportet. Si ergo has qualitates et quantitates, etiam formas figurasque volumus ratione animi separare, tum demum deliberare, quid sit illud, quod haec omnia inseparabiliter adhaerens complexumque contineat, inveniemus nihil aliud esse quam id quod quaerimus, silvam; inventa igitur est origo silvestris (all quality and quantity adhere to each other in *silvam*; reason separates figures out of the mass of material)" (305); and a **composite** is resolution of a "concrete discretion," in which the mind separates component parts from general unordered material: "Nunc illud aliud consideremus, quod compositio cognominatur; sequitur quippe resolutionem composito et discretionem concretio. Quae igitur modo separare animo videbamus a silva" (305). Finally, to return full circle, **figures** which make up composites within the generality of material are varied and diverse, and "persevere" in this variety and diversity: "Namque ut cera, quae transfigurata in multas diversasque formas non ipsa vertitur sed figurae, ipsa in propria natura perseverante, cum figurae non sint quod cera est, sic opinor silvam quoque formis figurisque variatam, cum de sua condicione minime recedat, recte patibilem dici" (310).

¹⁹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*: "Quae figura dicitur *hypozeuxis*, quando diversa verba singulis apta clausulis apponuntur" (31); "Haec figura locutionis dicitur *epembasis*, enumerationis studio verba repetens ..." (51); "Quod beatus Augustinus in *Enchiridion* more suo latius et utiliter explicavit. Factum est autem hic pulcherrimum schema, quod graece dicitur *auxesis*, quae addendo quaedam nomina per membra singula rerum augmenta congeminat" (52); "Per figuram *mythopoeiam*, quam in quarto psalmo iam diximus, aptissime hic verba dantur

designs, and functions. Some, such as hyperbole, parable, ethopoeia, idea, and paradigm are still very much with us. Varied and diverse figures in procession constitute the formal plan of Cassiodorus' work.²⁰ Further, Cassiodorus finds variety and diversity nearly everywhere he looks: in decoration, virtue, in pipes and strings, in the music instruments themselves, in rewards for various and diverse virtues, in modes, in graces, and in persons. He finds that many diverse things find their conclusion in one proposition.²¹ Variety and diversity signify dynamism for this commentator.

Ecclesiae" (63); "Hoc schema dicitur **metabole**, id est iteratio unius rei sub varietate verborum" (64); "Per figuram **parabolen**" (68); "Quod **genus schematis** multis locis reperies in litteris sacris. Totus autem hic psalmus propter futuri iudicii timorem noscitur esse conscriptus; quod utique rectae mentis est imminentes metuere calamitates et illud timere quod meretur excipere" (72); "... Bene volentia igitur in **exordio** diligentissime comparata ... " (75); "Sive hoc per figuram **hyperbolen** potest accipi, per quam solent aliqua in magnitudinem exaggerationis extendi ... " (76); "quibus convenit schema quod dicitur **allegoria**, id est inversio, aliud dicens, aliud significans" (80); "Quae figura dicitur **epexegesis**, id est explanatio dicti superioris" (81); "Quae figura dicitur **syllipsis**, quoties casus discrepantes in unam significantiam congregamus" (89); "Quae figura dicitur **peusis**, latine autem percunctatio, ubi et interrogatio fit et responsio parata subsequitur ... " (92); "Quae figura dicitur **idea**, cum speciem rei futurae velut oculis offerentes, motum animi concitamus" (98); "Deinde per figuram **synathrosmos** ... Quod schema inter violentissimas figuras accipitur, quando plurimae res in unum et multa crimina colliguntur" (117); "Quae figura dicitur **antisagoge**, id est: contradictio" (119); "Quod schema graece dicitur **syndesmos**, latine collatio, quando sibi aut personae aut causae, sive ex contrario sive ex simili comparantur" (120); "Quae figura dicitur **epimone**, quando similia dicta crebra repetitione geminantur" (123); "**erotema**, quando interroganti fit apta responsio" (132); "**paradigma**, sicut et in primo psalmo iam dictum est. Invitat enim nos prosperis et terret adversis" (134); "Hoc schema dicitur **zeugma**, id est coniunctio" (136); "Haec figura dicitur **ethopoeia**, quoties datur locutio certae personae" (137); "Quae figura dicitur **aetiologia**" (141); "Qui versus figuram continet **parenthesin**, id est interpositionem" (145); "Quod schema dicitur **characterismos**" (183). [Emphases added.] It is of interest to note that some of Cassiodorus' figures have Latin equivalents; some retain the original Greek.

²⁰ Medieval writers noticed this too; cf. Nokter Balbulus, *De interpretatione divinarum scripturarum* II, in Jacques Paul Migne ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina* (PL 139; Paris: 1855-1866). "In cuius [libri psalmorum] explanationem Cassiodorus Senator, cum multa disseruerit, in hoc tantum videtur nobis utilis, quod omnem saecularem sapientiam, id est schematum et troporum dulcissimam varietatem in eo latere manifestat" (955D).

²¹ For expressions of various and diverse *personae*, cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, II.1137.176: "Erravi sicut ovis quae perierat: require servum tuum, quia mandata tua non sum oblitus. Licet diversas personas psalmus iste contineat loquentes, modo fidelissimos veteris testamenti, modo novae regenerationis electos,

Cassiodorus, clearly, demonstrated his keen interest in various and diverse figures. But Cassiodorus' figures themselves form, as a group, an example of a **composite** of varied and diverse figures. Each *figura*, as an autonomous unit, is taken from a different source, yet each retains its shape, unique design, rendering each *figura* recognizable. Further, each can be seen to form a type—each is stereotypic.

Later Developments

A meaningful, rational background for varied and diverse figures was both presented and summarized by Cassiodorus, with his extensive descriptions of figures as they occur within the course of the psalms. We know, by the broad and long-lived manuscript transmission of Cassiodorus' psalm commentaries, that this background was available to the late twelfth-century writer and teacher, Alan of Lille, as well as the thirteenth-century theologians Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquinas. All three were associated with the early university of Paris.²²

What use did these writers make of this background of varied and diverse figures, and what significant changes occur? Perhaps the most direct way of describing, for comparison, an early medieval view of varied and diverse figures is to bring to mind Cassiodorus' construct of the *ecclesia*, or "world-wide Christian church" composite, which he conceived as a contiguous circle, or crown, of characters or figures. All of the individual members are absent, hence must be imagined.²³ Cassiodorus implies that the crown as a totality

alios martyria sustinentes, alios in lege Domini assidua meditatione constantes; declaratum est tamen in membris Christi Ecclesiam catholicam loqui, quando talis sententia in fine psalmi dicitur, quae sponsae Domini convenire monstratur;" II.1139.2f: "... ut beatitudinem fidelium populorum, *quam ille unita meritorum varietate cantavit*, isti in sacramentum novi et veteris testamenti ordinatis quindecim gradibus explicarent (writing in the context of the "gradual Psalms")."

²² This connection, in the case of Grosseteste, is debatable, but see the "Introduction" to Nancy van Deusen, *Theology and Music at the Early University: The Case of Robert Grosseteste and Anonymous IV* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 57; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

²³ Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* I.183.4: "Haec erat corona capitis, hoc regale

constitutes a so-called *characterismos*, possessing descriptive and informative qualities. All of the qualities ascribed to it must be placed together as an imaginary mental construct. The *ecclesia*—the crown—was not present in anyone's, including Cassiodorus', proximity. He also requires that the characters themselves, of which the *ecclesia* was comprised, must be imagined. For the *ecclesia*, the human components must be drawn from all parts of the world, as well as from all periods of history—a cross-cultural, supra-chronological feat requiring an extraordinary imagination, as well as a formidable fund of historical information.

This capacity of *figurae* to transmit vivid significance to the inner as well as the outer eye without precise, specific, designated details, preoccupied—in some ways, mystified—Cassiodorus. The *cithara*, as a *figura*, that is, a stringed music instrument, was also such an example of a shape with unspecified details of construction or sound-producing capacity which was used to make available significance to the inner eye of the imagination, and, as such, was extensively used as a metaphor by Cassiodorus.²⁴

diadema, quod non ornaret impositum sed de Christo Domino potius ornaretur. In hac enim corona et totius mundi circulum merito poterimus advertere; in quo generalis significatur Ecclesia. Quod schema dicitur *characterismos*, id est informatio vel descriptio, quae sive rem absentem sive personam spiritalibus oculis subministrat."

²⁴ Cf. Pseudo-Rhabanus', *Allegoriae in sacram scripturam* (Patrologia Latina 112): "*Cithara*" is "*recta operatio, vita activa, mortificatio carnis, laetitia*," as well as "*in dolorem laetitia mea, suavitas consolationis*" (897). It should be noted that all of these attributes for the *cithara* usually come together; if one has one, one has all, and all, together, form a balanced composite containing order in serene organization, and appropriateness, the practical in combination with "sweet contemplation," discipline, joy, and loving kindness. All are obviously positive; all are designated by the *figura* of the *cithara* itself. In the following quotation, from Flodoardus Remensis, *De triumphis Christi sanctorumque apud Italos* X.12 (Patrologia Latina 135), again, a stringed instrument brings together the varied and diverse (in abstract terms), referring, as well, to the influence of Cassiodorus: "Cassiodorus ... Davidis carmina tractat, clarificans supero modulata poemata nablo illustransque pias divino lumine turmas" (771C). *Modulata* brings various and diverse tones together.

Alan of Lille, writing in the twelfth century, observed that not only should external *figurae* transmit **shape**, but **sound** as well. This writer contrasts multiplicity and diversity with the simple. Varied and diverse figures each have a voice and that is one of the reasons for their variety and diversity. The letters of the alphabet form an obvious example of this resonating diversity. Each letter, when pronounced, emits a different **voice**, hence, a different meaning: *quia in superficie littere, resonat litteralis intelligentia* ("in superficial letters resonate significances") he wrote, relating **voice** to the varied and diverse **letters** within words.²⁵

The concept of **diversity**, itself, for Robert Grosseteste, was the issue. Written towards the end of the first generation of the thirteenth century, his prologue

²⁵ "Multiplicity" or multiple **voices** within a perceived unity is an important topic for Alan of Lille, who employs expressions such as *agalmata* or *confectio facta ex diversis specibus, multiplex, collectione, and diverse portiones*, contrasting them with the simple and single. Cf. Alan of Lille, in Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny ed., *Alain de Lille. Textes inédits. Avec une introduction sur sa vie et ses oeuvres. Avec 2 planches hors texte* (Étude de philosophie médiévale 52; Paris:Vrin, 1965) 226. "Videamus quid singula operentur in hac descriptione; quia sine plurium collectione ordo non est, in descriptione appellatur **multitudo**, et quia non solum angelorum, sed etiam hominum multitudo esse potest, ideo adiungitur "spirituum," et quia malorum spirituum est **multitudo**, additur: "celestium;" et quia bonorum angelorum potest esse **pluralitas in modo intuendi Deum** non conveniens, ideo sequitur ... " (203); "... In quo ergo sit uniformis ordo angelicus, determinatur, cum adnectitur: "caractère theophanie," id est modo vel figura divine visionis. **Multiplex** est autem modus videndi Deum." The distinction between **singular** and **of many sorts** is also abstract, as *symbolum*: "... et 'Credo in Deum' symbolum nuncupatur, quia in eo **diverse portiones sive articuli** christiane fidei continentur ... Dicuntur autem huiusmodi locutiones symbola a 'syn,' quod est simul, et 'olon,' quod est totum, quia multiplex scientia in his sermonibus continetur quia in superficie littere resonat litteralis intelligentia ... " (201). [Emphases added.] Cf. Alan of Lille's, *Expositio super symbolum apostolicum et Nicenum*, in d'Alverny, 84, and the same author's, *Distinctiones* (Patrologia Latina 210): "signum, unde Dionysius in Hierarchia similitudines quae trans-feruntur a terrenis ad caelestia vocat symbolicas ... dicitur collatio, in qua simul plures portiones ad convivandum ponuntur; et dicitur symbolum a 'sin,' quod est simul, et bolus, boli, quod est portio, quoniam unusquisque ponit ibi portionem suam ... dicitur sermo in quo continentur diversi fidei articuli" (964); also in d'Alverny, 201. There is essentially no visual aspect to this construct of diverse portions which form the *symbolum*, but, rather, the sonorous connotations of *resonat* or *locutiones*, that is varied and diverse articulations. Further, in contrasting multiple voices with singularity, *simplex* is not divisible, so far as its "voice."

to the *Hexaëmeron*, a commentary on part of the book of Genesis is a tour de force of types of, and reasons for, diversity. The various regions of the world produce varied and diverse characters, types of wisdom, languages, professions, motions, and signs.²⁶ There are diverse motions and quantities, with signs, which indicate both. There are diverse souls, spirits, and animals, according to diverse and varied materials from which they are formed, and diverse nutrients by which they are sustained, as well as what they, in fact, are like.²⁷ Various and diverse figures have—and show—diverse faces.²⁸

In his quest for a complete explication of diversity in all of its aspects, Grosseteste brings together figure, face, motion, and sound as an composite example of the concept of varied and diverse figures. Various figures have diverse voices, he writes, using a stringed instrument, *lira*, with its diverse strings, emitting tones, as example.²⁹

Let us review what has been suggested so far. A composite cognitive construct has formed, module by module. These modules include the concepts of variety and diversity within unity, the sharply-delineated artifactual *figura* as a visually-perceived, significant entity, voice, diversity itself, and a stringed-instrument, the *cithara* or *lira* as a metaphor for various and diverse sounds within a perceived totality. Each of these modules is

²⁶ Cf. his, *Hexaëmeron* (Auctores Britannici medii aevi 6, Richard C. Dales and Servus Gieben, OFM Cap. eds.; London: Oxford University Press, 1982) 23-25. Grosseteste quotes copiously from the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville.

²⁷ Ibid.: "Cibantur autem animalia diversimode secundum diversitatem materierum ex quibus est eorum substantia. Cibantur enim singula a nutrimento simili materiae suae creacionis; et non est nutrimentum eorum nisi ab eo in quo naturaliter delectantur" (213).

²⁸ Ibid.: "Omnibus aliis planetis existentibus retrogradis, ipsa ostendit ad terras diversas facies sui luminis secundum omnes varietates figurarum intra arcum semicirculi et arcum maiorem semicirculo contentorum, cum figura semicirculi et figura circuli perfecti" (182). [Emphases added.]

²⁹ Ibid. (progression from *carmen* to *lira*, to various voices): "Et dicitur lyricum a lira. Lira autem dicta est ἁπὸ τοῦ λυρεῖν, apo toy lyrein', id est a varietate vocum, quod diversos sonos efficiat; quia igitur David conscripsit psalmos apud hebreos metrico carmine, more romani Flacci, et greci Pyndari, nunc metro iambico, nunc alcaico, nunc saphico trimetro, nunc pede exametro: ideo dictorum poetarum nominibus eum descripsit Ieronimus" (39). (Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* VIII.vii.4).

important for the composite, all, together, form a significant, perceptible unity in the concept of varied and diverse figures or voices—a concept which was important enough by the mid-thirteenth century to be mentioned time and time again, not only by Grosseteste, but many other writers as well. The construct itself demonstrates how composite constructs—whether mythic, narrative, or written—accumulate their significance, that is, from a wide variety of sources, and as an aggregation of self-contained chunks of meaning. A composition, whether verbal or written, is the aggregation, or placing together of significant chunks, according to the medieval definition of the process.³⁰

By and large, however, Grosseteste's varied and diverse figures are still figures for the imagination and the mind. They are still intellectually perceived by a process of reflection—no flesh and blood, no masked various and diverse faces, no raucous cacophony of home-made percussion—in short, no *charivari* yet in Grosseteste's commentaries on the book of Genesis, or the *Physica* of Aristotle. We have diversity itself exemplified by diverse motions and the sounds that motions make, but no *charivari*. The composite requires concretization and actualization—real figures and real noise. It seems like a simple, rational chunk, but all additions require a reason, demand a source.

Masks representing schematicized, recognizable characters, varied and diverse figures within sequence, with examples from everyday experience leap out of the *Poetica* of Aristotle, which was translated and available to the Latin reading public for the first time since antiquity during the last generation of the thirteenth century:

We are and have been dealing with *schemata*, or stereotypic figures, wearing masks, brought to mind, or to the memory by playwrights

³⁰ Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, who has seen this composite process in the modular congruence of significance for the witches' sabbath, and uses this discovery as the structure of his *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (Raymond Rosenthal trans.; New York: Pantheon, 1991).

(*poete*), in drawing across the stage representations of the *prologus* (as a type), or many diverse and varied mimes (*ypocritarum*), and so remind an audience—who may be ignorant of these—of the principal characters of the plot. So, in using the *simplex*, that is, the simple, unified, straightforward figure, clear characters enuntiate how these figures (*schemata*) differ, one from the other, to what extent, and in what manner a concentration of the essence of a character may occur, or how a character may, through time, change. This is true, whether in other genres or in tragedy.³¹

(It is of interest that the term *simplex* becomes an important music-notational term just during this period, signifying the same thing, namely, a simple, unified, indisputable, recognizable figure.) The *Poetics* grants stereotypic characters context—the plot—bringing them closer to experience, and making them, as Aristotle writes, comprehensible and memorable.

Another Aristotelian source, the treatise, *De Anima* (*Concerning the Soul*), which was translated into Latin and known by the first generation of the thirteenth century, appears to have had increasing influence during the last generation of this century. *De Anima* contains the concept of various and diverse instruments, or means of sound generation. As soul has body, sound has instrument.³² Aristotle's characters are carefully and sharply delineated

³¹ *De Arte Poetica* 1449b3, in Lorenzo Minio-Paluello ed, *Aristoteles Latinus* XXXIII (CPMA, Guillelmus de Moerbeka trans.; Brussels: De Brouwer, 1968): "Iam autem schemata quedam habente ipsa, qui dicuntur ipsius poete memorantur. Quis autem larvas tradidit aut prologos aut multitudines ypocritarum et quecumque talia, ignoratum est ... Simplex habere et enuntiationum esse, hac differunt; adhuc autem longitudine, hec quidem quam maxime temptat sub una perioda solis esse aut modicum variat, epopiia autem optima tempore et hoc differt; equidem primo similiter in tragodiis." (Cf. quotation, containing the concept of the *figurae* ... *variari* from Aquinas' commentary on the *Metaphysica*, note 10.) [Emphasis added.]

³² In the context of obtaining knowledge about the soul—admittedly one of the most difficult things in the world—as Aristotle states, affections of the soul are discussed. Passion, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, loving, and hating, all have a concurrent affection of the body (403b1-25). Therefore, the physicist must concern himself with all of the properties active and passive of bodies or the materials of

so that they can be recognized. His sound-makers are percussive—rattles, bells, gongs, and drums so that they can be heard—but there is also an indefinite stringed instrument, among them.

Thomas Aquinas' *characterae variae*—easily truncated *charivari*, as it is in the early fourteenth-century *Roman de Fauvel*—were clear, recognizable, diverse characters with voices. But, argued Thomas, in his commentary to the *Metaphysica* produced during the period of the Latin translations of the *Poetica* and *De Anima*, if characters are too clear, they also become conventional and no one pays attention to them. Their signification is lost. Make it fabulous, puerile, or frivolous, and nearly everyone will get the point.³³

bodies (403b9-18). The instrument which appetite employs to produce movement is a bodily instrument (433b18-20). (From a consideration of materials and parts which make up body, sound is discussed in terms of sound producing materials: Actual sound is always of something in relation to something and in something: for it is generated by an impact. Hence it is impossible for one body only to generate sound—there must be a body impinging and a body impinged upon; what sounds does so by striking against something else, and this is impossible without a movement from place to place (419b9-13). See also Charles Burnett, "Sound and its Perception in the Middle Ages," in *The Second Sense: Studies in Hearing and Musical Judgement from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 22, Charles Burnett et al. eds.; London: The Warburg Institute, 1991) 51ff.

³³ The implication is that this was often the case; certainly Aquinas does not encourage it, since exaggeration is more than is necessary to bring out the truth. People in general, states Thomas, in their own immaturity, are more willing to give approbation to what is vain and frivolous, than what is strictly true, even though it is conventional, hence entirely recognizable. Cf. Aquinas' Commentary on the *Metaphysica*, in Cathala, O.P.: "Primo ostendit virtutem consuetudinis in consideratione veritatis. Secundo manifestat per signum, ibi, 'Quantum vero vim habeat etc.' ... Ea enim, quae sunt consueta, libentius audiuntur et facilius recipiuntur. Dignum enim videtur nobis, ut ita dicatur de quocumque, sicut consuevimus audire. Et si qua dicantur nobis praeter ea quae consuevimus audire, non videntur nobis similia in veritate his quae consuevimus audire. Sed videntur nobis minus nota et magis extranea a ratione, propter hoc quod sunt inconsueta. Illud enim quod est consuetum, est nobis magis notum. ... Manifestat quod dixerat per quoddam signum; ostendens ... quantam vim habeat consuetudo: in quibus quidem legibus propter consuetudinem magis valent fabulariter et pueriliter dicta, ad hoc quod eis assentiatur, quam cognitio veritatis. Loquitur autem hic Philosophus de legibus ab hominibus adiuventis, quae ad conservationem civilem sicut ad ultimum finem ordinantur; et ideo quicumque invenerunt eas, aliqua quibus hominum animi retraherentur a malis et provocarentur ad bona secundum diversitatem gentium et

One hardly expects this of Thomas Aquinas, yet, with the introduction of just this final module for our construct—the *fabulous*, *puerile*, and *frivolous*, the composite of varied and diverse characters, that is, *figurae sive characterae variariae* is complete. These components snap together visually for the first time in the early fourteenth century. (Example, *charivari* from the early fourteenth-century *Roman de Fauvel*, which combines three modes of expression: music, text and pictures to produce the ultimate in sophisticated spoofs—a commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysica*.³⁴) All of the modules come together in the *charivari*, or *characterae variariae*.

Conclusion

It has been attempted to observe how conceptual constructs are formed, and become significant; how traditions are transformed. Once all of it has come about, there is an air of inevitability about it. Taking apart a construct is like dismembering an organism—everything fits together before one began to analyze it. There are three things to be observed by way of summary, demonstrated by the above example. They are: first, imaginary or oral, and written compositions **both** contain autonomous modules placed together within compositional wholes. Process and result, in both oral and written composition, are the same. Second, perhaps more importantly, no boundaries in this constructive process exist between highly literate—in this case Latin-speaking and writing—and popular cultures. One must remember that, in this case of the early university, there were many *nationes* of students, for example, in Paris, but Latin was the vernacular language of none of them. The Latin language was a significant step removed from actual daily verbal

nationum in suis legibus tradiderunt, quamvis multa eorum essent vana et frivola, quae homines a pueritia audientes approbabant quam veritatis cognitionem” (92).

³⁴ See the 14th century manuscript kept in France, fol. 34 recto (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale fonds français, no. 146); cf. Nancy van Deusen, “The *figura* of Fauvel: Modality applied in the *Roman de Fauvel*,” in *The Harp and the Soul: Essays in Medieval Music* (Studies in the History and Interpretation of Music 3; Lewiston: Mellen, 1989) 329-383; and idem, “Scholastic Dynamics and the *Roman de Fauvel*,” in *Tradition and Ecstasy: The Agony of the Fourteenth Century* (Nancy van Deusen ed. [forthcoming]).

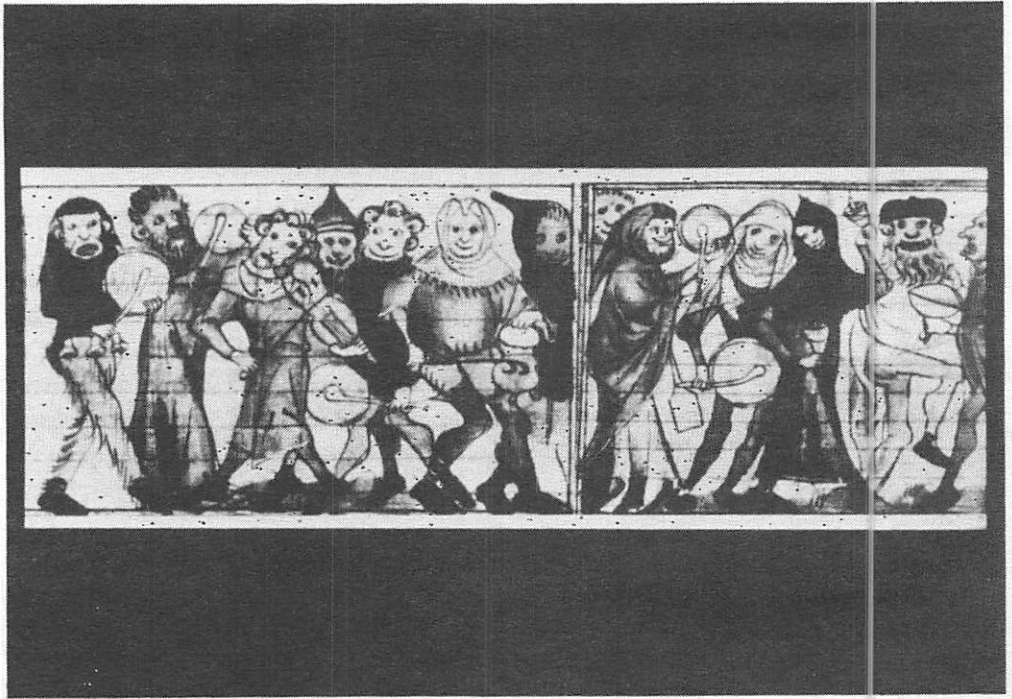
communication—a step that appears to be as significant as the difference between oral and written communication. Nevertheless, a successful composite is a successful composite. Thirdly, constructs, once formed, are tenacious. The *charivari* is very much with us today, as a “folk practice,” as Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt’s recent volume *Le Charivari* points out. It also seems to be the essence of M. M. Bakhtin’s concept of “carnivalization,” without the author’s apparent awareness of the tradition behind the term he coins.³⁵

One of the reasons why we study any culture, whether removed by time, or made distant by space, is that we can, conceivably, actually learn something from that culture. In this case, nothing could be more relevant to a late-twentieth—and probably also twenty-first-century situation. I return to medieval discussions of diversity. What these writers appear to regard as most important is that while a diversity of places, pasts, histories, tongues, and customs, of movements, styles, foods and tastes exist, yet all of these “various and diverse figures or characters,” representing diverse places and races, originate from the same substance. Hence, all are necessary, together,

³⁵ Cf. *Le Charivari*, especially Carlo Ginzburg’s contribution, “Charivari, associations juveniles,” in which the author sets forth a concept of “rough music,” based upon a “principle of deformation,” in which form is identical to ritual, 131–133. Cf. also the writings of Bakhtin, whose concepts of “carnivalize,” “carnivalization,” “polyglossia,” generating a distinction between “high” and “low” cultures, are a recurrent, formative concept-complex in the majority of the essays that have been translated into English. (See, for example, Bakhtin’s essay, “Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* [University of Texas Press Slavic Series 1, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist trans., Michael Holquist ed.; 8th ed.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992]), especially, 24–26, in which the writer’s ideological agenda of investing a “popular imagination” with creative energy, specifically with respect to the “carnavalization of legends surrounding Dante, Pushkin, etc.” is set forth, although Bakhtin implies and suggests, rather than states clearly, what is signified by “carnavalization.” There are, of course, social, ideological implications in Bakhtin’s use of the term, which I do not consider to be the case with the *topos* I have described. *Characterae variatae*, in the writings under discussion above, have to do with a cognitive-compositional construct. Any implied hierarcies of social levels are not included, indeed would have been inappropriate to a medieval discussion of diversity.

to show what it means to be human. Is that not a message, from Late Antiquity and the Medieval Period, for us?

Plate



Charivari (various and diverse characters)

From *Le Roman de Fauvel* (Paris, early 14th century manuscript)

